

P. F. Baldwin Use of Special Envoys

It is curious that the government of a nation like ours, which attaches so much importance to organizational procedures and efficiency should display so strong a predilection, at times, for the ad hoc method of handling a problem. Special committees are appointed to perform functions which fall within the jurisdiction and competence of regular agencies of the Government. Special ambassadors are appointed and sent abroad.

Two recent examples, which can hardly fail to perplex serious students of our international relations, were the dispatching of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker to Indonesia and the recently announced intention to send former Ambassador Lodge on a visit to several Southeast Asian nations.

The position of the United States in the Indonesian situation obviously leaves much to be desired.

Whether the policy has been right or wrong it is difficult to believe that our position in the matter will be improved by a move which must, to Indonesians and to others, seem to reflect either a lack of confidence in our ambassador in Djakarta or an almost desperate, direct effort by the President to continue a relationship which has, in recent years, produced little but frustrations, broken promises, and shattered American hopes.

Is there need in Washington for information from the Southeast Asian states which will be visited by Mr. Lodge which could not be supplied by our ambassadors in those countries? What questions will be asked by the special ambassador—or for that matter what questions were asked by Ambassador Bunker—or what statements made which could not have been asked and stated as well by our professional diplomats in the

countries under scrutiny and who are well acquainted with conditions and officials there?

If our ambassadors in trouble spots are believed to be incapable of meeting the requirements of their posts they should be replaced. If they are capable, our Government should manifest its confidence in them by using them as ambassadors have traditionally been used—and as they should be used—and not diminish their importance in the eyes of the host governments by superimposing upon them a special emissary to do their work.

It is possible to conceive of situations abroad where the special skills or experience of a newcomer appointed directly by the President may be usefully employed. Such situations are likely to be rare and, when they develop, the appointment of a special emissary will probably be well, and perhaps helpfully, understood. The use of such special representatives should be infrequent and only when there is no normal way of handling the situation.

In recent years there has been a tendency to disregard the traditional status of ambassadors as personal representatives of the President who possess the right, and should possess the capability, to speak for him in situations of the utmost importance and advising him with competence and authority. That tendency diminishes the prestige and influence of our ambassadors and of members of their staffs. It diminishes the return which the American Government and people have the right to receive from the careful selection and training of our Foreign Service personnel. And it is the wrong way to do the job.

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